



Idaho 44 Corridor Preservation Study

Frequently Asked Questions



Date: November 7, 2007

The Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) are working together to identify future transportation needs along the Idaho 44 corridor from Interstate 84 to Eagle Road.

The study will include a regional vision for the highway, an implementation plan, an access management plan, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and an analysis of a Middleton Alternate Route.

General questions about Idaho 44

1. Will Idaho 44 eventually be widened all the way to Boise?

This study of Idaho 44 considers widening the two-lane highway from I-84 near Caldwell to Ballantyne Road in Eagle. Idaho 44/State Street has four existing travel lanes through Eagle and Garden City to downtown Boise. The Ada County Highway District (ACHD) is working on a separate study of State Street from Gary Lane/Glenwood Street to downtown Boise.

2. Are traffic signals planned for Idaho 44 at major intersections such as Duff Lane, Lansing Lane and Middleton Road?

Based on a preliminary traffic analysis and projected traffic volumes, the Duff Lane, Lansing Lane and Middleton Road intersections may warrant signalization. ITD will not install signals at these locations until traffic volumes warrant.

3. Where will traffic generated from the northern growth be routed?

The City of Middleton and the Canyon Highway District are working on a local roadway plan. If you are interested in this planning process, contact the City of Middleton at 585-3133 or the Canyon Highway District at 467-6576.

4. Is the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) planning to build any bridges over the Boise River between Star and Middleton?

The regional long-range transportation plan, *Communities in Motion*, prepared by Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho¹ shows a need to study a future river crossing between Star and Middleton. This crossing would be under the jurisdiction of the Canyon

¹ Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) is an association of local governments working together to plan for the future of Treasure Valley. COMPASS members set priorities for spending federal and state transportation dollars that come to Southwest Idaho and plays an important role in making decisions about future long-range transportation needs.

County Highway District. Funding for the construction of a river crossing is not anticipated in the next 25 years.

5. What is an expressway?

A divided highway for through traffic with controlled access on and off the roadway. Intersections usually have overpasses and underpasses separated from the roadways.

6. Why is Idaho 44 not being planned as an expressway?

An expressway has not been officially discarded from consideration, but the existing property access, growth patterns and expense along the corridor may preclude the feasibility of this type of roadway.

U.S. 20/26 is being considered for an expressway treatment.

7. Is there a flood plain south of the city?

As a part of this study ITD will establish the boundaries of the flood plain in the project area.

Middleton Alternate Route

8. Why can't the alternate route be farther south beyond the river?

Traffic on Idaho 44 is primarily an east-west movement. Out-of-direction travel, caused by locating an alternate route significantly south or north of the existing highway, will increase travel time. This makes a southern route less desirable or effective.

9. Can the route be kept for local traffic only?

If and when an alternate route around Middleton is constructed, the state highway would move to that new route. The existing highway in the bypassed area would be given to the city to use as a local "Main Street" road.

10. With an alternate route, why can't Middleton's Main Street remain a two-lane corridor?

Based on ITD's traffic forecast, Main Street would not need to be widened if an alternate route is constructed. Therefore, it would remain as it is today, a two- or three-lane road.

11. Can the alternate route be connected to Emmett Road?

Yes. The City of Middleton's Draft Master Transportation Plan (August 2007) identifies a connection of Emmett Road with the alternate route.

12. Will Emmett Road be extended as part of the Middleton Comprehensive Plan alternate route?

The City of Middleton's Draft Master Transportation Plan (August 2007) identifies a connection of Emmett Road with the alternate route. Extending Emmett Road would be a city project as part of this plan.

13. The Middleton School District has plans to build a new high school at the intersection of Emmett and Willis roads. Has this been considered in the western start of the alternate route?

ITD has taken input from the City of Middleton on the early draft concepts for the beginning and end of the alternate route. The future high school is an important consideration in traffic flow and will be included in our refined traffic analysis. We will add public comments from the Middleton Alternate Route public meeting into those considerations.

14. What will the intersection of Middleton Road and Idaho 44 look like if a southern alternate route is built?

Based on ITD's traffic analysis, the intersection may require separate right- and left-turning lanes, single lanes for north- and southbound traffic, and two eastbound lanes and two westbound lanes.

15. Is there any other road that will connect with the alternate route?

Yes. The intersections are Emmett, Cemetery and Middleton roads and at the east and west ends of the alternate route.

16. Can alternate routes for the cities of Star and Middleton be connected?

Preserving additional right-of-way in the five miles between Star and Middleton would be very challenging and costly. An alternate route in Star is already proving difficult due to existing development.

17. Will ITD need to demolish buildings in downtown Middleton if they do not build an alternate route?

ITD anticipates the need for four travel lanes to accommodate forecasted 2030 traffic. Right-of-way impacts will be determined as part of this corridor preservation study.

18. How will an alternate route affect the downtown feel?

If there is an alternate route, Main Street will no longer be a state highway, and the city will have more flexibility with the road through downtown.

19. Would an alternate route affect existing businesses?

A number of studies have been done on the impacts of highway bypasses. They generally show that retail stabilizes over time and there is an ultimate benefit to the city. There are many variables that affect the success, including land use planning and economic development initiatives.

An example of an alternate route in the Treasure Valley is State Highway 44 in the city of Eagle.

20. Could Floating Feather Road be used as an alternate route?

At this time Floating Feather Road could not function as an alternate route. Floating Feather Road dead ends west of Can Ada Road (Quenzer Lane). The Ada County Highway District is studying the possibility of re-aligning Floating Feather Road in Ada County and continuing the roadway west into Canyon County. However, there are currently no plans to increase the capacity of the roadway.

21. Will ITD build noise barriers along the alternate route?

The need and location of noise barriers to mitigate noise impacts associated with an alternate route will be determined through a noise analysis. Those interested in more information about the process can go to www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRonment/noise/faq_nois.htm or contact the ITD or COMPASS project manager.

22. How will the alternate route affect homes?

The effect on existing residences from future improvements along the corridor will be depends on many factors. These factors will be analyzed as a part of this study. Those with property adjacent to a proposed alternate route should stay informed of the project development process and stay in contact with the project managers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

23. People want to put a greenbelt on the north side of the river. Why not put a greenbelt along the Middleton alternate route all the way to Caldwell?

A greenbelt is a recreational facility that is a local decision. Plans for a multi-use pathway in the highway corridor will be discussed with the cities of Middleton, Caldwell, Canyon County and the public.

24. Will there be bike lanes?

There are several options for bicycle traffic. A bike lane is one alternative; separated multi-use bike and pedestrian pathways are another.

25. Where is public transportation planned along the corridor?

According to Valley Regional Transit's² Treasure Valley in Transit Plan, Idaho 44 would serve as a bus route from Middleton to Boise. Service would be provided every 15 minutes during morning and afternoon rush hours with midday service provided every 60 minutes. Express service would also be provided to major employers in the region. Additionally, Park-n-Ride facilities would be provided along the corridor in Star and Middleton.

Funding

26. Can sales tax be increased by 2 to 4 percent to fund these road projects?

Growth, construction costs and shrinking revenue have affected ITD's ability to keep up with transportation needs. The Idaho Transportation Board organized a cross section of state and community leaders called the Forum on Transportation Investment in 2004 to discuss these concerns. These proposals are expected to be a priority issue in the next legislative session. For more information, see <http://itd.idaho.gov/revenue>.

27. Will the corridors for Idaho 44 and U.S. 20/26 be given preference before the Idaho 16 extension to Interstate 84?

ITD does not know the answer to this question. The Idaho 16, I-84 to Idaho 44 Environmental Study is funded by Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds. Funding for improvements to Idaho 44 and U.S. 20/26 has not yet been identified.

² Valley Regional Transit (VRT) is the regional public transportation authority for Ada and Canyon counties in southwest Idaho. VRT is responsible for coordinating public transportation services in the two-county region and developing a regional public transportation system.

28. If we are at the point of trying to identify an alternate route in 2007, was the time and money spent to date wasted?

The City of Middleton has worked with developers to lay the groundwork for a successful alternate route. The highway is a state-owned facility and Idaho is experiencing a severe shortfall in revenues for transportation projects. This study includes an ongoing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will identify right-of-way that ITD can purchase with federal money. The EIS process also requires an independent analysis of an alternate route alternative.

Impacts (wetlands, noise, right-of-way)

29. With the West Nile Virus problem, why would anyone worry about filling wetlands?

Federal regulations require that impacts to wetlands be avoided or mitigated. Wetlands play an important role in our water quality. They assist with cleaning surface water and provide valuable wildlife habitat.

30. What measures will be taken to buffer the noise impact to surrounding property owners from widening or a new alignment?

ITD is conducting a noise analysis to determine impacts from an alternate route. Traffic noise impacts occur under two conditions:

1. Existing or future noise levels are unacceptably high (absolute).
2. A proposed highway project will substantially increase the existing noise environment (relative).

If impacts are identified, then mitigation measures must be considered and implemented, if feasible and reasonable. The result of the noise analysis will be presented at future public meetings.

Those interested in more information about the process can go to www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/noise/faq_nois.htm or contact the ITD or COMPASS project manager.

31. If landowners are displaced by the project, will they be adequately compensated so that they can purchase another home or property?

The Uniform Act provides important protections and assistance for people affected by federally funded projects. This law was enacted by Congress in 1971 to ensure that people whose property is acquired, or who move as a result of projects receiving Federal funds, will be treated fairly and equitably and will receive assistance in moving from the property they occupy. Idaho Code (7-711A, 7-711, and 54-4105(5)) also addresses the property rights of owners.

A property owner is entitled to be paid for any decrease in property value when part is acquired by the state. This compensation is generally measured by comparing the value of the property before and after the taking. The value of the property is based on an appraisal and the highest and best use of the property. For more detailed information, visit

www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate/ua/uafags.htm, or call 334-8300 to speak with an ITD right-of-way agent.

We encourage those who own property adjacent to the corridor to stay informed about the project and keep in contact with the ITD project manager and/or right-of-way staff.